

3). Overcast weather conditions on the later days of capture may have reduced the available food resources.

Hence food consumption on these days may have been less, resulting in lower weights. The

crop contents on the first two days, when weather conditions were normal, were full.

March 7, 1991

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11. THREE ADDITIONS TO THE BIRDS OF KERALA, WITH A REPEAT SIGHT RECORD

Since September 1985, we have been regularly watching birds on the Malabar coast, and have been rewarded with sightings of hitherto unrecorded or rarely seen birds. Four such additions have been published by us and R. Venugopal (*JBNHS* 86: 458-9). Here we report three more additions to Kerala, and a repeat sight record.

Calidris tenuirostris (Horsfield): The eastern knot, hitherto unrecorded from Kerala, was sighted in the Katalundy estuary (20 km south of Kozhikhode) on 10 October 1987. Gradually their numbers rose from a brace on the first day, to 12 by the end of the month, but declined to two by 27 December.

Farther south in Sri Lanka, the eastern knot was first sighted by Ben King at Mannar on 4 March 1981, and subsequently several were sighted in 1983 at the same place (King, *JBNHS* 86: 10).

Limosa limosa (Linn.): The blacktailed godwit is said to have become common and plentiful in recent years in the coastal regions and Dry Zone areas of Sri Lanka (Hoffmann, *JBNHS* 86: 10). The first record for Kerala is from the Katalundy

estuary on 13 September 1987, when three individuals were met with. On 6 March 1988 we came across about 50 individuals resting among teals, with a second group feeding in the shallow water nearby. This was in the estuary of the Bharathapuzha (Malapuram district).

During a subsequent visit to the same area on 13 March 1988, over 50 birds were found feeding in two or three loose flocks.

Tadorna ferruginea (Pallas): A solitary brahminy duck, hitherto unrecorded from Kerala, was first seen in Bharathapuzha estuary on 6 March 1988. The bird was present there on 13 March. E. Ayyappan (pers. comm.) recalls having seen the brahminy duck in this estuary some 3-4 years back.

In addition to the above three new records for Kerala, we also found the crab plover *Dromas ardeola* Paykull in the Katalundy estuary on 21 October 1987. It remained there till 27 March 1988. The bird was first recorded from Kerala by K.K. Neelakantan and others (*JBNHS* 77: 503).

February 4, 1991

P.K. UTHAMAN
L. NAMASIVAYAN

12. SOME WADER RECORDS FROM COASTAL ANDHRA PRADESH

Pulicat Bird Sanctuary in south coastal Andhra Pradesh (13°25' to 13°55' N, 80°03' to 80°19' E) is the second largest brackishwater body in India, with extensive coastal salt lagoons and

mudflats. The sanctuary has an area of about 450 sq. km of which a major part (84%) lies in Andhra Pradesh and the rest in Tamil Nadu. The sanctuary is a major wetland for migratory shorebirds on the

eastern sea board of India and vast numbers congregate here on the mudflats during the winters.

While carrying out bird migration studies at Pulicat during 1990 several species of waders were banded to study their movement patterns. Two species were ringed which are interesting in terms of their distribution and occurrence, as they are new records for Andhra Pradesh.

Rednecked phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (Linn.): Seven birds were ringed (Ring nos. A-232535 to A-232541) at Atkanithippa in Pulicat Bird Sanctuary on 21 September 1990. According to the HANDBOOK OF BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1987) the rednecked phalarope is mainly a winter visitor to the coasts

of India and is seen mainly on the western seaboard. On the eastern coast there are very scanty records of this species, usually seen off the coast. As the birds were seen in the mudflats of the Sanctuary they were probably on passage.

Eastern knot *Calidris tenuirostris* (Horsfield): One was ringed on 19 September 1990 (Ring no. B-57777) at Atkanithippa. There are isolated records of the eastern knot on the eastern coastline, but its occurrence at Pulicat is a new record for Andhra Pradesh.

K.K. MOHAPATRA
PRAKASH RAO

November 30, 1990

13. CONFIRMATION OF THE BREEDING OF THE COMMON TERN *STERNA HIRUNDO* LINN. IN SRI LANKA

Reference is made to my paper on the breeding of the common tern *Sterna hirundo* in Sri Lanka (Hoffmann 1990, *JBNHS* 87 (1): 68-72). In that paper I reported in detail on a breeding colony of the common tern, which I discovered in 1980 on a small island of coral debris (called Irrachchal), off the east coast of Sri Lanka. It is the first and so far only case of breeding of this tern anywhere in the Oriental region. Although there were strong indications (presence of many adult birds in breeding plumage) that breeding also took place in subsequent years, actual proof was lacking. For a number of reasons, but chiefly because of the ongoing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, I was unable to visit the island at the right time for a number of years.

But at the end of May 1990 I did pay another visit to the island. I had seen common terns in breeding plumage in the area as early as end March and, therefore, confidently expected to find evidence of breeding.

In 1980 I discovered the first five nest scrapes with eggs of the common tern at the end of May. By the end of June there were 41 nests with intact eggs, seven with broken eggs, two with downy chicks and about 12 abandoned nests, indicating a colony strength of over 60 breeding pairs of common terns. Thus egg laying started at the end of May, reached its peak by about the middle of June, and was completed by early July.

Large crested terns *Sterna bergii velox* regularly use this island for breeding; sporadic egg laying may take place during June, but reaches its

peak during the second half of July.

By mid-July (when the breeding of common terns is almost completed) roseate terns *Sterna dougallii* and little terns *Sterna albifrons* may also breed on the island. The breeding seasons for the various species may vary somewhat in different years, in response to weather, feeding and possibly other conditions. I visited the island on 23 May 1990, at mid-morning. There were about 20 large crested, 8 roseate and 10 common terns perching on the coral pieces, all in unmistakable breeding plumage. The common terns stood out by their bright red bills with black tips, glossy black caps, bright orange legs and feet, dark edge on end of upper wing (in flight), and sleek silvery-grey and white plumage. All birds took to the air when I approached the island and when I landed. The large crested and roseate soon disappeared and only the common remained, variously circling in the air (with loud, high pitched cries of *twink*) and settling down at the highest point of the coral debris. The birds took off and settled nervously even when I was only 5 m away from where they had perched. When I got closer, some would dive at me with a harsh and angry *kaaarr*. This continued throughout the period I was on the island.

I found five eggs in typical nest scrapes, marked and lined with small pebbles, shells and some feathers (as in 1980). The nests were widely spaced and close to or between large pieces of coral (some standing upright, thus providing shelter and shade, and perhaps protection against crushing